

## Isaiah 8:16-9:7

### Introduction

The next section, 8:16-20, is a chiasm:

Call to the Law and Testimony	8:16 Bind up the <b>testimony</b> , seal the <b>law</b> among <b>my</b> disciples.	20 To the <b>law</b> and to the <b>testimony</b> : if they speak not according to this word, <i>it is</i> because <i>there is</i> no light in them.
Seek the Lord	17 And I will <b>wait</b> upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will <b>look for</b> him.	should not a people <b>seek</b> unto their God? for the living to the dead?
Godly vs. Demonic Signs	18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given <b>me are</b> for <b>signs</b> and for <b>wonders</b> in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.	19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have <b>familiar spirits</b> , and unto <b>wizards</b> that peep, and that mutter:

The first person of 16-18 disappears in 19-20. This could be God responding to the devoted comments of his servant in 16-18.

This section may be best viewed as a transition. The conclusion, “There is no light in them,” sets up the dawn of ch. 9, while the call to seek the Lord rather than wizards expands on Ahaz's error.

### 8:16-20, The Source of Truth

#### 16-18, Messiah Speaks

The big question in vv 16-18 is who is speaking, where. The question can be further divided:

1. Is the same person speaking in all three verses, or are different people speaking? Some commentators hear two different voices here (Targum, Calvin, Alexander, Young), or even three (Gill, Motyer) (see table in the notes).
2. Who are these people? The Lord (continuing from v. 15)? Isaiah? Messiah?

On the first question: see the notes: elsewhere in the OT, the grammatical constructions with which vv. 17 and 18 begin never allow a change of speaker. So we should assume the same speaker throughout these three verses. This is also suggested by the parallel with vv. 19-20. One person speaks in 16-18, and the Lord responds in 19-20.

If the Lord responds in 19-20, then the speaker in 16-18 is not the Lord. The other candidates are Isaiah and the Messiah.

The messianic view is supported by the citation of v. 18 in Heb 2:13. Note this verse in its context:

11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. 13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. 14 Forasmuch then as the children

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are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;

Vv. 11 and 14 claim that the promised Messiah is “one” with his people, a “partaker of flesh and blood,” and this verse, together with Ps 22:22 (12) and Isa 8:17 (13a), are quoted to support this. But this argument requires that the “I” in Isa 8:17,18 be spoken by the Messiah.

We have already seen that the passage bears signs of Messianic reference, in that the Lord, who is speaking (v. 11), yet refers to “the Lord of Hosts” in the third person (vv. 13, 14). The second and third Servant Songs, Isa 49:1-6; 50:4-9, begin with unintroduced first person statements by the Messiah. So it would not be unusual to find the same voice breaking in here.

Some might question the objectivity of attributing these verses to the Messiah based solely on a Christian interpretation from the first century, after Messiah has appeared. But in fact, that interpretation draws on a far older authority, the LXX translation. That version begins the first person references in v. 17, which it translates,

17 **And he shall say**, I will wait for God, who has turned away his face from the house of Jacob, and I will trust in him. 18 Behold I and the children which God has given me: and they shall be for signs and wonders in the house of Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in mount Sion.

The third person here naturally continues the third person references in vv. 13, 14, so that the speaker is explicitly the one about whom the Lord is talking throughout this section.

Now, our authoritative text is the MT, not the LXX. But the LXX shows that vv. 17-18, at least, were understood messianically before the coming of Christ, and so it is not a later imposition for us to understand them that way as well. And given the grammatical coupling between 16 and 17, we should understand all three verses that way.

Recognizing these three verses as the words of the Messiah gives us an important key to interpreting and applying them.

**16 ... the testimony, ... the law**—The repetition of these two words in v. 20 suggests that they should be understood, not in terms of Isaiah's teaching, but as references to two aspects of God's revelation. Compare the use of the terms in Ps 19:7,

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

God's *testimonies* instruct us what to believe, and his *law* instructs us how to behave.

**16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.**—Notice first the *fact* of the request, and then its *content*.

The speaker is asking that the Lord provide for his (the speaker's) disciples. This is the ministry of intercession that our Saviour is constantly performing for us:

Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

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The *content* of the request is that the Lord preserve the effect of his revelation among the speaker's disciples, and not allow them to lose it, or to lose their attachment to it. The request is strongly reminiscent of our Lord's prayer in John 17,

14 I have given them thy word; ... 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

It corresponds also to the promise of the New Covenant, which the Messiah secured to his people, in Jer 31:33,

After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;

The Lord has set forth the promise of the Lord of Hosts, who will be a sanctuary to some, but a stumblingblock and snare to others. Now the Messiah, that coming sanctuary and stumblingblock, intercedes for his own disciples, and prays that the Lord will keep them faithful to his revelation so that they will enjoy him as a sanctuary rather than as an offense. Delitzsch: "For it would be all over with Israel, unless a community of believers should be preserved, and all over with this community, if the word of God, which was the ground of their life, should be allowed to slip from their hearts."

In answer to this prayer, God certainly has preserved his word in a miraculous way down through the ages. Now, since our Lord places such a high standard on our attention to his Word, we should make it a priority of our lives. We should read it daily, study it, discuss it, pray over it, treasure it.

**17 ... the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob**—As the dichotomy of v. 14 makes clear, while some delight themselves in the Lord as their sanctuary, to others he brings judgment. This latter aspect of his work is now in focus. When the Lord hides his face from his people, he withdraws his care from them and does not notice when bad things happen to them. This is the opposite of the promise "Immanuel," "God is with us." Deut 31:17 brings the two concepts together when it threatens this judgment as a result of the nation's sin.

16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and **I will hide my face** from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, **because our God is not among us?** 18 And **I will surely hide my face** in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

**17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.**—During this time of judgment, the Messiah does not lose hope, but trusts in the Lord's promises of future restoration. The verbs mean "to wait expectantly, to be patient."

This was certainly our Lord's attitude during his earthly ministry. He faced rejection from those who should have recognized him, and had to trust in the Lord. Isaiah anticipates this aspect of Messiah's ministry with particular clarity, in the servant songs. Compare Isa 53, and 49:4-5,

4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. 5 And now, saith the LORD

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that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

Peter highlights this attitude of our Savior, and commends it to our imitation:

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Like our Lord, we live in a Christ-rejecting, God-rejecting world. We are to follow his example and commit ourselves to the Father's care, trusting in his timing.

**18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me**—Because our Lord is the son of God and he has enabled us to become the children of God, we usually think of ourselves as his brethren, a relation that is warranted by Scripture:

Ps 22:22 I will declare thy name unto my **brethren**: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee (quoted in Heb 2:12)

Matt 28:10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my **brethren** that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many **brethren**.

So it is probably a mistake to understand this verse as teaching that we are Christ's offspring. “One is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matt 23:9). The Saviour taught us to call him “Our Father” (his and ours, Matt 6:9). We are indeed children, but God's children, entrusted by him to his Son (often in John's gospel, cf. John 6:37, “all that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.” Thus Isa 53:10 should properly be translated, “He shall see a seed”; the possessive pronoun is lacking in Heb. And when the Lord addresses the “little children” in John 13:33, it is with reference to their youth, not their descent from him, for 1:12 makes clear who children they are (where “sons of God” should be rendered “children of God”).

Here, then, Messiah associates himself with the ones whom the Father has given him, those who will be known in the NT as the children of God. This is the phrase that Heb 2:13 cites as evidence that the Messiah shares our humanity. He associates himself with the children whom he came to redeem. They are the “brethren” of whom he speaks in Ps 22:22.

**are for signs and for wonders in Israel**—Certainly, he is a sign and a wonder, but so are we.

- Our very salvation is a wonder. The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,” John 6:29.
- He has promised us that we will do “the works that I do, and greater works” (John 14:12).

Our lives, empowered by the HS, are a powerful testimony to the world around us.

Matt 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

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Phi 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

1Pe 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

**from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.**—The Messiah claims no credit for the signs and wonders that he and his disciples, the children of God, present to the world. They come from the Lord. Though he has hidden his face from the house of Jacob (8:17), he still reigns from Mount Zion. To those who trust in him, no matter how dire the times, he is “God is with us.”

### **19-20, God Responds**

**19 And when they shall say unto you,**—The first person references are over. The Lord of v. 11 is speaking again. Note that the second person pronouns are plural. He responds not only to the Messiah, but also to his “disciples” (v. 16), the “children” whom the Father has given him (v.18). (Compare the second person plurals in vv. 12-13, going beyond Isaiah to those with him.)

**Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter:**—Those who pursue the occult today speak of the “new age,” but there is nothing new about spirit mediums and sorcery. The world has long been fascinated with the supernatural, but it wants it on its own terms. The brotherhood of Messiah and the Father's children offers more than enough of signs and wonders to satisfy anybody, but that demonstration brings with it the obligation to submit to the Lord, and the world will not have this. So it seeks after miracles from the wicked one. Such miracles are real, but they are toxic to spiritual life, and believers are to have nothing to do with them.

Deut 18:10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, 11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. 12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD:

Satan tries to tempt God's people into such forbidden arts, but if we remember that we are “signs and wonders,” we will be better able to withstand this temptation.

**should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?**—Now we come out to the second level of the chiasm. Messiah declared his willingness to wait for the Lord, and we should follow his example and seek after the true God, not try to call up the dead.

**20 To the law and to the testimony:**—Now we return to the beginning of the chiasm. Messiah had prayed that God would secure his word in the hearts of his people, and God now calls them to attend to that authoritative standard for action (law) and belief (testimony).

**if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**—Literally, “they have no dawn.” God's word is often compared to light. Compare

Psa119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

Those who abandon the authority of the scriptures condemn themselves to wander in darkness.

The Bereans appreciated this principle when they

received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:11).

This image of God's law as light, and of unbelievers as walking in darkness, pervades the next paragraph.

## 8:21-9:7, From Darkness to Light

The Hebrew of this section is extremely complex, and in a number of cases the AV translators have not captured the sense.

The speaker has now changed, showing that the oracle of 8:12 is over. Note how Isaiah now describes God's affliction of Zebulon and Naphtali and his later kindness to them in the third person in v. 1, and the second person verbs addressing God in vv. 3, 4.

The section can be divided into three parts, based on the fortunes of Israel that the verse describe.

- 8:21-22 are universally negative.
- 9:3-7 are universally positive.
- 9:1-2 look back to the darkness and ahead to the coming light.

As we observe the transition from darkness to light, from judgment to salvation, it is important to observe that the people do nothing. We have already seen them turn from God's revelation to wizards, rejecting the law and the testimony. In 21-22 they shake their fists in anger at God when his judgment falls. Yet once he has shown his wrath, he graciously turns their darkness into light. They do not deserve his salvation, but he provides it out of his own free grace.

### 8:21-22, *The People in Darkness*

**21 And they shall pass through it,**—That is, the land. The clause “pass through it” is the language of pilgrims traveling through an alien land. It echoes the reports of the spies in Num 13:32; 14:7, describing their journey through a land that they did not yet possess, and is the language of Israel's request to traverse other lands during their wandering. Thus Moses sent to the king of Edom,

Num 20:17 Let us **pass**, I pray thee, **through** thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.

Note his similar request to Sihon king of Og in 21:22; Deut 2:27, 28. Those who reject God's law are pictured as the spiritual descendants of the spies who rejected the land. Like those spies, they will be condemned to wander in the wilderness.

The rest of this verse characterizes them in three ways.

**hardly bestead [hard-pressed] and hungry:**—First, they will suffer. In the coming judgment, it will

no longer be a bountiful land, but a place of trial and famine. They have abandoned God's revelation, and now he abandons them.

**and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves,**—The simple verb (Qal) means “to be angry.” This is the only place that it is used reflexively. The second characteristic of those who have rejected the Lord and his law is that they stir themselves up to anger. Their anger is not a justifiable response to an external wrong, but something they cultivate in themselves.

We see this tendency among political activists in our own day, stirring up discontent where there is none to start with. The Bible teaches us to be content with such things as we have and trust God to provide our needs. The world frets themselves, thinking that they can stir up enough fleshly strength to fix things in their own power.

**and curse their king and their God, and look upward.**—Their third characteristic is that even though they have rejected God's authority, when things go wrong, they blame whatever authorities there are, on earth and in heaven, looking up and shaking their fists in their self-induced wrath.

**22 And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.**—Heaven is closed to their entreaties, and earth presents them only with sadness and distress. Note the threefold repetition of the theme of darkness, the lot of those who have rejected the light of God's word in v. 20 in favor of the occult.

### **9:1-2 Looking Backward and Forward**

Now Isaiah looks back at the darkness that their sin brought upon them, and ahead to the coming light. It is important to observe that the people have done nothing to deserve this change. The darkness was an expression of God's holy justice; the light is an expression of his free grace.

**9:1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation,**—Literally, “she who was in anguish shall not have dimness.” “Dimness” and “vexation” are related in turn to the two words “dimness of anguish” in the previous verse. But there is now a reversal. There will come a time when the darkness will be dispelled.

**when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.**—This verse presents three contrasts.

- “at the first” vs. “afterward.” The prophet compares the early times with the latter. Just how early and how late is open to discussion. Jer 50:17 uses the words to contrast the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity (“Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: **first** the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and **last** this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones”), but we know that Isaiah delights to contrast the near-term judgment with the future restoration.
- “Zebulun” and “Naphtali” with “the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.”
  - The first two terms are northern tribes, one in lower Galilee around Nazareth, the other extending into the highlands further north. Notably, he excludes Asher, which lies along the

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seacoast, and Dan, which by now had left its original territory along the Mediterranean west of Benjamin and settled in the far north by the sources of Jordan.

- “Galilee of the nations” describes roughly the same region. “Beyond Jordan” would refer to the land east of the Jordan river. The phrase “way of the sea” appears elsewhere only in Ezek 41:12, where it is a directional reference, “toward the west,” and may balance “beyond Jordan” in bounding the region.<sup>1</sup> This description differs from “Zebulun and Naphthali” in two ways. First, it emphasizes its mixed character rather than its Israelite heritage. Second, its extent is broader, extending all the way from the sea to the other side of the Jordan, potentially including Asher and Dan.
- “Lightly afflicted” and “more grievously afflict” are simply the Hebrew verbs “to make light” and “to make heavy.” Two interpretations have been offered.
  - The AV makes them refer to two successive waves of oppression from the north. A foe from Mesopotamia would naturally follow the Fertile Crescent and enter the land through these territories. Gill suggests TP3 for the first and Shalmaneser or even Titus for the second. This would align with Jeremiah's use of “the first” and “the last” noted above.
  - The two verbs are often used (though in Piel rather than Hiphil) in contrasting senses, “to despise” and “to honor” (cf. 1 Sam 2:30). In this case, the first verb still refers to the coming invasion(s), but the second points to a later restoration. This contrast would go with a longer-term understanding of “afterward” in the first contrast.

So the verse invites two possible interpretations.

1. If “afterward” is the near future and “light-heavy” compares two levels of affliction, it predicts successive waves of invasion: multiple Assyrian kings, Babylon, and ultimately Rome.
2. If “afterward” is the more distant future and “light-heavy” means “despise-honor,” the verse anticipates restoration after judgment.

I prefer the second interpretation, for two reasons.

1. It offers a very nice parallel with the contrast in v. 2, which promises light after darkness.
2. Isaiah is building up to the great Messianic promise in 9:6.
3. This is how the NT understands it. Matt 4:13-16 quotes this verse to explain why our Lord's ministry began in Galilee:

13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the

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<sup>1</sup> David Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (Johns Hopkins, 1991) 159 identifies this with a road from Abel beth maacah, through Kedesh and Sasa, to the coast at Achzib. He points out (p. 49) the common custom of naming roads after their destinations, and claims, “There is no demonstrable example in the Hebrew Bible of a road named after the region through which it travels (contra Aharoni 1979:45 [*The Land of the Bible*]). Most likely, therefore, the well-known but enigmatic *derek hayyām* [Isa 8:23 [9:1]] was not “the Way of the Sea,” i.e., the so-called Via Maris, the international route that passed through the length of Israel's coastal region (contra White 1976:124 [“roads” in *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible*]; Mendelsohn 1962:689 [“Travel and Communication in the OT” in *IDB*]; and others). Rather, *derek hayyām* must be understood as designating a road that led to the sea—presumably a road leading through Galilee to the Mediterranean (see Rainey 1981:146-51 [“Toponymic Problems (cont.), The Way of the Sea, Shim'on-Shimron Once Again”, *Tel Aviv* 8:146-151]; Aharoni 1979:45-46)” (p. 49).

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borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: 14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; 16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Matthew understands the verse's "afterward" to refer to the first century, and clearly would see the coming of Jesus as "honor" rather than "more grievous" affliction. In support of this interpretation, note how the second half of the comparison anticipates a broader extent for "Galilee of the nations" than just Zebulon and Naphthali. In fact, our Lord's ministry extended "beyond the Jordan" (when he went to heal the Gerasene demoniac, and in his visit to Caesarea Philippi, which lay in the territory of Dan).

Though the events described are future, the verbs are in the past tense here and through v. 4. The prophetic vision is so certain that Isaiah speaks of it as accomplished. We often see this "prophetic past" in the prophets; cf. Isa 53, "he was wounded for our transgressions."

The next verse repeats this contrast between the darkness of God's judgment and the light of salvation, twice.

**2 The people that walked in darkness**—Those in 8:20 who refused the law and the testimony, and whose misfortune is described in 8:21-22. Both of the images here are picked up in our Lord's description of himself in John's gospel.

**have seen a great light:**—The coming of the Messiah. As the invaders came around the fertile crescent, the northern part of the country would be the first to feel their wrath. In pity on their suffering, God allows them to be the first to hear the teaching of the Messiah, by bringing him out of Nazareth.

This first contrast calls to mind our Lord's promise in John 8:12,

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

**they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death,**—In a desert land, a shadow can be a refreshing thing, but the expression "shadow of death" denotes a deep, impenetrable darkness, the darkness of the tomb, where all hope is lost and no light can ever penetrate. The expression is always negative. It usually does not refer specifically to death, but "to such trouble as casts a death-like shadow over life" (Motyer).

In the first half of the verse, the darkness is associated with the people and their conduct. Here it becomes a characteristic of the land, languishing under God's judgment. When the people walk in darkness, their land becomes darkened.

**upon them hath the light shined.**—Yet the gloom will not be permanent. God will miraculously send his light.

The most famous reference to "the land of the shadow of death" is Ps 23:4, "the valley of the shadow of death," through which one can pass without fear if accompanied by a capable shepherd. Again, John's gospel comes to mind. Our Lord is not only "the light of the world" to enlighten those who "walk in darkness," but also the good shepherd:

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

### **9:3-7, The People under Blessing**

In this third paragraph of the section, the warning of gloomy judgment is over, and we read only of joy and victory. He first describes the coming joy, then gives three reasons that set forth the Lord's mechanism for delivering it.

### **3, Description of the Joy**

**3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy:**—The negative doesn't make sense, given the following clause. The Jewish scribes who preserved the text inserted a notation that though the word that is written is “not,” the word that should be read is “to him,” which differs by only one letter and is pronounced the same. That is, instead of reading “not increased the joy,” read “increased the joy to him” (“increased his joy”).

The OT is full of these corrections, which are known as “*ketib-qere*” readings, from the Hebrew words for “what is written” and “what is read.” BHS, the standard edition of the Hebrew OT, marks nearly 1700 of them, and our version often follows the *qere* (as, for example, in 10:32, where the *ketib* is “house” and the *qere* is “daughter,” or 63:9, which offers the same variants as here). It is simplest here to follow this course as well.

Thus we should read, “Thou has multiplied the nation, and increased its joy.” When the nation's punishment is ended, God will increase their numbers and their joy.

**they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.**—He now gives two pictures of their joy, one peaceful, the other militant. Both anticipate the return of the nation from captivity.

The **joy in harvest** is beautifully illustrated in Ps 126:5-6,

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Sowing is a great risk for the farmer. If he does not sow, he can eat the seed, but then next year he will starve, because he has planted nothing and nothing will grow. But if he does sow and the rains fail or the locusts come, he will have less to eat this year and then starve next year as well. “Bearing precious seed” refers to the sowing, the casting upon the ground of seed that might otherwise be eaten. So when harvest comes, it is a time of great rejoicing.

The whole of Ps 126 celebrates the return of the nation from captivity: “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.” The commentators usually refer the sowing to the first attempts at returning the land to productivity by the settlers, attempts that at first were met with difficulty because they were not giving priority to the rebuilding of the temple (Hag 1:1-11). But Isaiah prophesied, not joy in harvest, but joy *like* the joy in harvest, and it seems likely that the Psalm reflects his vision. In that case the sowing and reaping are meant as a figure of the captivity. Israel was sown among the nations, to all appearances destroyed just as seed sown upon the earth is wasted. But the years in captivity were, in God's providence, a fruitful field that brought forth fruit, a revitalized nation purged of its idolatry and eager to serve the Lord.

The **joy of dividing spoil** is illustrated in the history of 1 Sam 30, when

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1 the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;  
2 And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

Ziklag was David's personal possession. David pursued the enemy, and found them

16 ... spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.

Soldiers in the old days were not motivated by patriotism, but by the hope of taking spoil. Like farming, the occupation was a gamble. At the outset of a battle, you don't know whether you will win or lose. If you lose, you are dead, or taken captive as a slave. But if you win, you get the riches that were owned by your enemy.

This image is also appropriate to the end of the captivity. When Cyrus sent the Jews back to settle their land, Ezra 1 records,

7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;  
8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

God restored to them the spoil that Nebuchadnezzar had taken.

The time of Israel's suffering was to be followed with joy, reflecting a principle that is common to farming and warfare. This is a general principle, and one that we are exhorted to keep in mind:

1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Jas 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Hebrews 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

We are called to labor for the Lord, and that labor is sometimes difficult. Furthermore, to help us deal with our flesh, the Lord will sometimes chastise us, and that chastisement is never pleasant. But the promise that God offered Israel applies to us. If we are faithful through sorrow, we shall one day rejoice.

These two kinds of joy were particularly relevant to the victory recalled in the next verse.

Each of the next three verses begins with כִּי "for," giving three successive reasons for the joy that God promises to multiply to his people. In such series, it is worthwhile to look for the relation among the various reasons. Here, we can trace a clear succession.

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1. God will deliver the people from the oppression of foreign rulers.
2. He will do this, not by making them a military power, but by bringing an end to war.
3. He will end war by bringing in the reign of Messiah.

### 4, First Reason: Removal of Oppression

**4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor,**—The first reason for victory is the end of their oppression. Isaiah recalls three implements of oppression.

- The yoke is placed on the neck of an animal so that it can pull a burden.
- The staff מטה is used to beat a slave into submission.
- “Rod” שֵׁבֶט here probably has the sense of “scepter” (cf. the contrast in Isa 14:15, though the English translations are not the same), and reflects the fact that the people are not independent, but under the rule of someone who wants to abuse them.

God will render all three ineffective against them. They will no longer be oppressed.

**as in the day of Midian.**—As an emblem of the coming deliverance, Isaiah recalls the history of Judg 6. There are numerous points of similarity between Gideon's victory over Midian in Judg 6-7 and the deliverance anticipated over Mesopotamian foes in vv. 1-2 :

- God promises joy like the joy in harvest, 9:3. Contrast Gideon in Judg 6:11 at the time of his call, “thresh[ing] wheat in [not 'by'] the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.” While the oppressors ruled, they appropriated most of the produce for their own use, leaving little for the people. There is no joy in harvest if someone else enjoys its fruits. Just as Gideon freed the people from this oppression so that they could enjoy their harvests again, the Lord will deliver the nation from the coming invasion.
- God promises joy like the joy over spoil, 9:3. Compare the outcome of the battle in Judg 8:24-26, a vast array of spoil from Midian (which Gideon unfortunately abused):

24 And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) 25 And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. 26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks.

- In 9:2, the tribes that suffered the initial blow from the Assyrian, and who will first enjoy the deliverance of Messiah, are Zebulun and Naphthali. These northern tribes were among the few who responded to Gideon's call for aid against the Midianites in Judg 6:35,

And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

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Note, by the way, how Isaiah encourages the people by pointing them to God's past gracious deliverance. This is a common argument in Scripture, and one that we should exercise among ourselves. Cf. Rom 8:32,

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

When you are discouraged, encourage yourself with God's past gracious acts. He who has begun a good work in you will surely bring it to completion.

### 5, Second Reason: End of Warfare

**5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but *this* shall be with burning *and* fuel of fire.**—The second reason for joy is that God will not only end their oppression, but also remove the very fact of warfare from them.

The words “battle” and “warrior” are the noun and verb form of the same root, which appears only here in the Bible. Confusion over the meaning of these words has obscured the structure of the verse.

New evidence from other ancient near eastern languages suggests that these should be translated “boot” and “marching.” Thus there is a semantic parallel between them and the “garments” in the next phrase.

There is also a grammatical parallel. “Boots marching with noise” is a noun followed by a participle and then by a prepositional phrase. “Garments rolled in blood” is also a noun followed by a participle, and then by a prepositional phrase using the same preposition as the first phrase. Isaiah is describing two images of the warfare that is past: noisy boots and bloodstained garments.

What do you do with all this stuff when a war is over? This is not the spoil, the riches, but worn-out and polluted equipment. Consider the image associated with the end of the great eschatological battle, in Ezek 39:9-10.

And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: 10 So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD.

You pile it up and burn it. This is what will become of the stomping boots and bloodstained garments of the oppressors. With the end of oppression, the equipment of those who abused them will be burned up. Translate the verse, “For every boot that marches with shaking, and every garment dipped in blood, shall be for burning, fuel for fire.”

This image recalls 2:4,

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

The end of oppression does not occur because Israel becomes a dominant power who can overwhelm

her enemies, but because God ends warfare entirely. (The linkage with ch. 2 supports Dorsey's analysis of the overall structure.)

It is disturbing how the religious right is sometimes associated with an eagerness for war. War is sometimes necessary, and until Messiah comes, Rom 13:4 and 1 Pet 2:14 show that armed force is appropriate in the hands of the state. But we should always remember that the messianic kingdom will be a time of peace. The vision in these verses aligns with that of Ps 46,

Psalm 46:9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

## 6-7, Third Reason: Coming of the Divine Child

**6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:**—The third reason for their joy, crowning the end of their oppression and the cessation of war, is the coming of a ruler who can sustain peace.

This is Isaiah's second reference to a miraculous child, and a third is yet to come.

1. The virgin's child Immanuel in 7:14 is miraculous because he is born to a virgin.
2. This child is miraculous because he bears divine names.
3. In 11:6, the rod of Jesse is depicted as “a little child,” who miraculously controls the entire creation.

The two expressions used to describe the birth of the child are remarkable. The usual construction for describing the birth of a child is the one used in 7:14 and 8:3, “a son is born.”

**a child is born**—Only once is a “child” (as opposed to a “son” or “daughter”) said to be born, and that is

2 Sam 12:15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the **child** that Uriah's wife **bare** unto David, and it was very sick.

The phrase takes us back to David's history. David acting as a king sought to produce an heir in his own way, according to his lusts. The act failed miserably.

**a son is given**—This expression is more common, and has two meanings. Isaiah likely alludes to both here.

1. It is used 9x with God as subject, to emphasize that the birth of a child is due to his gracious provision. Five of these times are with reference to Solomon, taking us again back to the royal history of David's house. The child to be born is indeed a gift of God's promise, going back to the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7.
2. The verb נתן is commonly used in the sense of “deliver up,” when one person surrenders someone into the control of another. Ominously, it is often used of surrendering children to an oppressor. Thus the Gibeonites ask for seven of Saul's sons to be given to them for punishment (2 Sam 21:6), and in the siege of Samaria, 2 Kings 6:28,29 use the construction of two women surrendering their children to cannibalism. It is in this sense that John speaks of God's gift of his son in John 3:16, echoed in Rom 8:32, “he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for

us all.”

Thus the two expressions are a synopsis of the promise of the davidic Messiah. We have already seen how prominent the dynastic theme is throughout the previous section. David tried to seize that promise in the flesh with Bathsheba, but “the child that was born” was sick and died. Isaiah looks ahead to the time when another “child” will be “born,” but this one will be “a son given,” in two senses: the fulfillment of the promise to David in 2 Sam 7, but also the Son of God, delivered up for sacrifice for the redemption of his people.

**and the government shall be upon his shoulder:**—The shoulder is where one carries a burden, as Rebekah her pitcher (Gen 24:15) or the children of Israel their kneadingtroughs when they left Egypt (Exod 12:34). The closest parallel is the Eliakim prophesy in 22:22,

20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah:  
21 And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 22 **And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder;** so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

“Government” מְשָׁרָה appears only here and in the next verse. It is derived from the word “prince” שָׂר that appears later in the verse to describe the “prince of peace,” שָׂר שְׁלוֹמִים.

Note the contrast with v. 4. Before, the staff of oppression was upon the shoulder of the people. They were forced to bear heavy burdens. Now they are delivered by a child-king who bears their burdens for them.

**and his name shall be called**—There follows a list of the names by which this ruler is to be known.<sup>2</sup> But how many are there?

The AV, followed by Handel's Messiah, distinguishes five.

Most modern commentators and translation see four names, each of three syllables (when one considers that the first word, a segholate, would have been pronounced as a single syllable in antiquity).

The Massoretic accentuation puts a *Telisha gedolah* on “Wonderful.” This is a disjunctive accent, though a weak one, and supports the AV's distinction. A thorough review of places where this accent comes on the first of two nouns (see notes) shows that in many cases, it marks a noun (or the last word of a clause) that is amplified in a following series. A good example is Deut 7:13, “the fruit of thy **land**, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.” Corn, wine, and oil are the expansion of “the fruit of thy land.” This construction is especially common when the first item is a name and the others help to refine it. E.g.,

Isa 7:1 And it came to pass in the days of **Ahaz** the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah

1 Sam 1:1 his name was **Elkanah**, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son

2 R.A. Carlson, VT 24 (1974) pp. 130-135 shows that all of these titles were associated with the Assyrian king, beginning with פִּלְאָ, which appears in the Hebrew spelling of the name of Tiglath-pileser. Isaiah is asserting the superiority of the Davidic dynasty, and in particular the coming Messiah, over the pagan monarchs who threatened the country.

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of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

On this basis, it is tempting to see “Wonderful” as the distinctive name of the child, which is then unfolded in four more specific titles.

**Wonderful**,—The word means “miracle,” and is often used to describe God's miraculous deeds:

Exo 15:11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing **wonders**?

Psa 77:11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy **wonders** of old.

Psa 77:14 Thou art the God that doest **wonders**: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.

Recall that the Messiah said of himself in 8:18,

I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts

(though the word “wonder” there is מופת, not פלא as here). The Angel of the Lord, in describing himself to Gideon's parents in Judg 13:18, said,

Judges 13:18 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret [wonderful פלאי, adj from פלא]?

So, following the Massoretic accentuation, we will take the first name, “Miracle,” as a summary of the four to follow. God is giving the nation a child, who will bear the government on his shoulder, and his name is “Miracle.” More specifically, there are four ways in which he is a miracle.

In exploring each of these names, we should remember that the coming of this child is the realization of the light dawning on those who were in darkness (9:2), and explore the promise that each name brings to us.

**Counsellor**,—The first refinement of the name “Miracle” is “Counselor.” What is miraculous about being a counselor?

We are likely to think of this word as referring to a psychologist or social worker, someone who helps people work through their problems. But in the Bible, it refers specifically to a member of the government, someone who advises a ruler: 2 Sam 15:12, “Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor”; Isa 19:11, “the counselors of Pharaoh.” So here we must inquire who is the king to whom this child offers counsel.

He himself is depicted as bearing the government. So it is not likely that he is counselor to an earthly king. As our study of the Immanuel prophecy in 7:14 shows, he comes to replace the Davidic dynasty, not to support it.

Whom then can he counsel? God has sent him, and he answers to God. So he must be an advisor to YHWH. But this immediately leads to another problem, highlighted by Isa 40:13-14,

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor [איש עצהו “man of his counsel”] hath taught him? 14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of

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understanding?

Job 21:22 Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high.

No man can advise YHWH. He is all-wise and all-knowing. He takes counsel with himself. Yet this child is called “Counselor.” He is a man, and yet he advises God. He is the one with whom God takes counsel when he says in Genesis, “Let **us** make man after our image” (1:26), “let **us** go down and there confound their language” (11:7). He is in a position to sway God's judgment when our sins are brought to the bar, where he is our “advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1). Here is the first way in which the child is called “Miracle.” He counsels the one who needs no counsel.

The Child's relation to God as Counselor is what allows him to be our high priest (Heb 4:15), our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1), the one mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2:15). He is a partaker of our flesh and so is sympathetic with our weakness, yet by his obedience has earned the attention of the Most High and can sway him to spare us.

**The mighty God**,—“Mighty” is a term commonly applied to warriors. It describes someone who is warlike, heroic, able to prevail in conflict. The combination with אלה "God" is fairly common, and always describes the Lord:

Isa 10: 20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the **mighty God**.

Jer 32:18 Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the **Mighty God**, the LORD of hosts, is his name, 19 Great in counsel, and mighty in work:

Deut 10: 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great **God**, a **mighty**, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

Neh 9:32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the **mighty**, and the terrible **God**,

Here is another way in which the child is called “Miracle.” In fact, two miracles are here proposed.

First, the child who is to be born of a human mother is also God. What was implicit in “counselor” now becomes explicit.

Second, not only is he divine, but he is a warrior, fierce and terrible. One does not usually associate military strength with a child. He will use force where necessary to overcome his enemies. Thus he will be able to protect his people and deliver them from those who oppose him.

As the Mighty God, the Child can defend us from a hostile world. Consider how this depiction of a youthful warrior is anticipated in the battle of David with Goliath (1 Sam 17). Our Lord, though weak in the world's assessment, has destroyed him who had the power of death over us.

**The everlasting Father**,—This is another unavoidably divine title. God is regularly called the father of his people, because of his role in creating them. Moses introduced the title:

Deut 32:6 Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy **father** that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

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Isaiah picks it up elsewhere:

Isa 64:8 But now, O LORD, thou art our **father**; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Note in particular Isaiah's association of the term with God's eternity:

Isa 63:16 Doubtless thou art our **father**, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our **father**, our redeemer; thy name is **from everlasting**.

Here is the third way in which the child is a miracle. Though a child, he is also a father, and in particular the eternal father.

The death of a parent is always a sobering reminder of our own mortality, the loss of one who had always been there for us, defining our world, instructing us from our youngest days. This Child will be an everlasting Father to us. Though he died, he rose from the dead, and we need never fear being left fatherless.

**The Prince of Peace.**—The word “prince” denotes someone of authority, yet less than a king.

Gen 12:15 the **princes** of Pharaoh

Isa 10:8 For [the Assyrian] saith, Are not my **princes** altogether kings?

Isa 30:4 For [Pharaoh's] **princes** were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.

Isa 31:9 And [the Assyrian] shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his **princes** shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

Isa 32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and **princes** shall rule in judgment.

Like “counselor,” it identifies the child as subject to the supreme king. He is like a cabinet secretary, or a minister of state. Thus we have two titles emphasizing that the child is subordinate to God, surrounding two that emphasize his identity with God, a true Wonder.

If we think of a prince as a cabinet secretary, this prince is in charge of the Department of Peace. In this connection he achieves peace in three areas.

1. First and most important, he comes to bring peace between God and man, who have been alienated by sin. Thus at the birth of the Lord the angels proclaimed,

Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace**, good will **toward men**.

Compare Paul's declaration,

Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ:

All this rests on Isaiah's prophecy,

Isa 57:19 “Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near,” saith the LORD; “and I will heal him.”

This role as peacemaker between God and man enables him to relieve the suffering that guilt

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brings upon us. Recall David's complaint in Ps 32:3,4,

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

The Prince of Peace can deliver us from this burden of guilt.

2. Because God offers this peace to both Jew and Gentile, as they draw near to him, they are united with each other. Thus Paul, expounding on Isa 57:19 in Eph 2:14-15, says that the Lord has “made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; ... to make in himself of twain one new man.”
3. More generally, the coming reign of the Messiah will bring peace among the nations.

Zec 9:9-10 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. 10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

One of the greatest challenges that we face during our pilgrimage is how to live in peace with those around us. As Prince of Peace, the Child can guide us in this responsibility.

Rom 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

It is important to remember that the Hebrew word שלום, commonly translated “peace,” has a much broader meaning than just the end of hostilities. It denotes prosperity in every way.

There follow four pairs that describe the rule of the child named Miracle. There may be some correlation between these pairs and the specific names of the Child.<sup>3</sup>

**7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be no end*,**—It will be an endless period of increasing government and pervasive peace. Note that “his” is in italics. Government will increase without end, and throughout this period of increase there will be peace.

The promise of “peace” recalls the final name of the Child, Prince of Peace.

Hengstenberg notes, “With worldly kingdoms, ... increase of government and peace, far from being always connected, are, on the contrary irreconcilable opponents,” because they are based on force (Rom 13). But this government is different from human ones. He will keep on expanding his rule forever, and the result will be never-ending peace.

**upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom,**—This pair describes the historical foundation of the rule outlined in the previous pair. The child will be the true heir to David's throne and his rule. “Throne” focuses on the subject, and “kingdom” on the object, of rule. The two are an echo of the davidic promise in 2 Sam 7,

13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the **throne** of his **kingdom** for ever.

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<sup>3</sup> Brian Johnson suggested looking for such correlations.

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16 And thine house and thy **kingdom** shall be established for ever before thee: thy **throne** shall be established for ever.

It is interesting that these promises also include the “house” of David, the line of kings descended from him. Isaiah does not repeat this word. With the promised Child, the house reaches its climax, and there is no need for any further kings.

**to order it, and to establish it**—The syntax is terse. I understand the connection to be one of means, “by ordering it and by establishing it ...,” stating how it is that the increase of government can coexist perpetually with universal peace. See Joüon-Muraoko 124 l for the infinitive construct with *lamedh*.

The two verbs mean “to found, make stable” and “to support,” and the objects are feminine, referring to the “kingdom” in the previous pair. The first verb describes the initiation of the kingdom. The second describes its ongoing operation. Both are appropriate to the title of the child as “Counselor,” one who guides the affairs of state.

The following pair describes the principles upon which the kingdom is founded and by which it is upheld. Before considering them, it is helpful to think of some of the alternatives.

Totalitarian kingdoms are founded upon, and upheld by, the personal ego of the ruler or the ruling class. Such a scheme never leads to peace, but to war, as the ruler seeks to expand his power until another, more powerful than himself, overthrows him and the cycle repeats.

Democracies are founded upon the will of the people, “deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” But these do not necessarily lead to peace. Those governed are sinners, and either their fear or their cupidity toward other peoples can often lead them to go to war.

**with judgment and with justice**—Here are the principles upon which Messiah's kingdom is founded. They remedy two failures that can occur in government. Isaiah is echoing another Messianic prophecy, Ps 89, which in v. 14 (MT 15), states of God,

**Justice and judgment** are the habitation [foundation, same root as “order”] of thy throne:

**Judgment** refers to the exercise of the processes of government. The first failure of government is neglect. Worldly kings and presidents can be distracted, spending their time in self-amusement. Compare the situation described in Eccl 10,

16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! 17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

Neglect can also arise from doing the wrong things, for example, conducting abstract policy deliberations or engaging in unrealistic diplomacy that bring no benefit to their people. The Messiah will devote himself to the rule of his people. He will not leave wrongs unpunished.

**Justice** is literally “righteousness.” The second way that government can fail is when its processes are executed, but against a false standard (such as pleasing the ego of a dictator, or gratifying the fleshly lusts of the majority). Messiah's government is based upon righteousness, conformity to the nature and will of God, who (Psa 145:17) is “righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”

This blessed state contrasts with the dismal situation before the Messiah arrives. Isa 59 describes the

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Lord's decision to enter our world. Before he comes,

14 **judgment** is turned away backward, and **justice** standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 15 Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and **it displeased him that there was no judgment.**

In this situation,

16 he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

Here in Isaiah 9, we are reading of the fulfillment of this promise.

**from henceforth even for ever**—We have already learned that the child's government and its resulting peace will be without end. At first glance, this pair simply repeats this promise. But on this reading, the member “from henceforth” (Heb. מֵעַתָּה “from now”) is strange. It seems to say that the Child's kingdom is already in place, when in fact the nation is about to descend into the worst oppression, under Assyria and Babylon, that it has ever experienced.

There are three possible answers to this observation.

1. It's still possible to understand that the Child's kingdom is in effect, in its mystery form. We currently understand that we live in the kingdom of God, in a spiritual sense, and pray that it might come on earth as it is now in heaven. But our Lord seemed to teach that the kingdom had come with his advent. Cf. the common gospel phrase describing the conclusion that people should reach from his miracles and teaching, “the kingdom of God is come upon you” (Matt 12:28; Luke 10:9, 11; 11:20). In addition, the contrast earlier in the chapter between the darkness the people were in and the light that is to come suggests that the blessings should be as tangible and physical as the judgment that came before.
2. Perhaps we are to understand “now” in the same sense as the past tenses earlier in the chapter. He has taken his position at the point in time when the child is born, and from that time and on, the kingdom is in effect. This is a possible interpretation, and has the advantage of keeping the series of pairs together. But there is be another option.
3. The Hebrew accentuation separates this from what goes before and attaches it to the following clause. In this case we should put the period, not after “forever,” but after “justice.” Then this pair is not directly talking about the Child's reign, but about the work to be done by the Lord's zeal. In spite of the troubles they are about to experience, God has not forgotten them, He is already working behind the scenes, and will continue to sustain his work into eternity.

Whether we choose #2 or #3, this pair emphasizes the Child's title as “Everlasting Father.”

**The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**—This rule is not incidental to God's greater purposes. It is the object of his zeal.

The word here rendered “zeal” is much more commonly translated “jealousy,” and the English words “jealous,” “jealousy” always translate forms of this Hebrew root זָקַן. To understand this concept, we must distinguish jealousy from envy.

- Envy is the anger you feel when someone else has something that you desire. A prototypical

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example, and the first instance of the verb קנא in the Bible, is the attitude of the Philistines toward Isaac,

Gen 26:14 For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.

- Jealousy is the anger you feel when someone else has unjustly taken what belongs to you. The verb קנא can also mean this, but the noun קנאה and adjectives קנא and קנוא only occur in the sense of jealousy. The prototypical example is the anger of a husband when someone else takes his wife, as in Num 5:14,

And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:

God is often described as jealous, when people give to themselves or to other gods the things that belong to him. He does not send the Messiah primarily to bless us, but to vindicate his claims over the earth. Satan seduced our first parents, whom God had made his viceroys over the earth, and thus gained control over God's creation. Now the Lord, moved by jealousy, is already preparing a plan to send “the second man” (1 Cor 15:47) to win back that dominion.

In Isa 59:17, his jealousy is part of the armor that he dons to come into the world and set right the lack of judgment and justice.

For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with **zeal** as a cloke.

Thus it is appropriate for us to see here a reminder that the coming Child is “the mighty God,” coming to do battle with his enemies and to recover his rightful property from their control.

## Notes

### ***First Persons in 8:16-18***

	16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.	17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.	18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me <i>are</i> for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.
Gill	Lord to the Prophet	Isaiah, waiting for Messiah	Messiah's answer
Alexander	Lord (or Messiah) to the Prophet	Messiah	Messiah
Motyer	Lord to the Prophet	The disciples of v. 16	Isaiah
Young	Lord to the Prophet	Messiah (or Isaiah as type of Messiah)	Messiah (or Isaiah as type)
Oswalt	Isaiah	Isaiah	Isaiah
Delitzsch	Isaiah	Isaiah	Isaiah

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Calvin	Lord to the Prophet	Isaiah	Isaiah
Targum	Lord to the Prophet	Isaiah's response	Isaiah
LXX	No 1p; Lord describes the faithless	Third person, parallel to vv 13, 14	Continuation of v. 17

Examine the constructions that introduce vv. 17 and 18

### **v. 17: Impv + converted perfect 1cs**

The question is whether a converted perfect can be the response of someone to a command from someone else, or whether both the command and the perfect are by the same person.

BW search is '\*@v{qph}q1\* \*5 \*@v{qph}v\*;2 . There are sixteen hits.

#### **Same person**

Num 10:29 come thou with us, and we will do thee good

Num 22:8 Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again

1 Sam 15:30 yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

2 Sam 14:30 *Ketiv* (*qere* has second impv)

2 Sam 19:33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

2 Sam 24:2 number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

1 Chr 14:10 Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand.

Prov 30:8,9 feed me with food convenient for me: 9 Lest I be full, and deny thee,

Jer 7:23 Obey my voice, and I will be your God,

Jer 42:20 Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.

#### **Different person**

1 Sam 14:9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place,

1 Sam 14:10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up:

(The converted form continues "If they say unto us," not the impv "tarry")

Ezek 11:17; 16:52 intervening verb or clause

## v. 18: הנה אנכי

Occurs 37x in OT. Whenever the speaker changes (12 x), it is marked explicitly by an IF (e.g., לאמר or ויאמר משהו). In all other cases, the speaker is clearly unchanged.

For the phrase הנה אני, eight out of 10 are introduced with an IF, and the other two are the same speaker.

הנה appears 181x, I haven't sorted through them all.

## **The Quotations of Heb 2:12-13**

Does the quotation of Isa 8:18 in Heb 2:13b mean that the speaker in this section must be Messiah? Or might it be Isaiah, perhaps as a type of our Lord? The question here is similar to the one we faced in the Psalms.

Interestingly, LXX departs from MT at this point. It renders vv. 17-18,

16 Then shall those who seal themselves that they may not learn the law be made manifest. 17 **And one shall say**, I will wait for God, who has turned away his face from the house of Jacob, and I will trust in him. 18 Behold I and the children which God has given me: and they shall be for signs and wonders in the house of Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in mount Sion.

It abandons the direct first person, and puts 17-18, which are both cited in Heb 2, in the mouth of a third person, conformable to the other references. The third person reference cannot be to Isaiah.

Following the other third person references Thus the text that the writer to Hebrews applies to Christ can easily be viewed as a prophecy of Messiah. But this makes the LXX at this point an early, pre-Christian attestation to the messianic interpretation of Isa 8:17-18.

## **A Son is Given (בן נתן nifal)**

### **Divine origin of the child**

The verb is commonly used to describe a birth with God as subject, to indicate that the birth is supernaturally ordained. Of nine instances, five are with reference to Solomon as the son promised to David.

Genesis 30:6 And Rachel said, **God** hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath **given me a son**: therefore called she his name Dan.

Genesis 48:9 And Joseph said unto his father, They are my **sons, whom God hath given me** in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

Deut 28:53 And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy **sons** and of thy daughters, which the **LORD thy God hath given** thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:

1 Kings 3:6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of

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heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that **thou hast given him a son** to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

1 Kings 5:5 (MT 5:19) And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy **son**, whom **I will set** upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name.

1 Kings 5:7 (MT 5:21) And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be **the LORD** this day, which hath **given** unto David a wise **son** over this great people.

1 Chr 25:5 All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And **God gave** to Heman fourteen **sons** and three daughters.

1 Chr 28:5 And of all my sons, (for **the LORD hath given** me many **sons**,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.

2 Chr 2:12 Hiram said moreover, Blessed be **the LORD God of Israel**, that made heaven and earth, who hath **given** to David the king a wise **son**, endued with prudence and understanding, that might build an house for the LORD, and an house for his kingdom.

## Pre-Existing

### *Deliver Over*

The sense in these vv is that one person is given into the control or power of another. It's incidental that it happens to be a son; similar uses of “to give” are found with other nouns. This captures the sense of John 3:16 (cf. Rom 8:32).

Exodus 22:29 Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy **sons** shalt thou **give** unto me.

Numbers 21:29 Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh: he hath **given** his **sons** that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites.

2 Sam 21:6 Let seven men of his **sons** be **delivered** unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them.

1 Kings 17:19 And he said unto her, **Give** me thy **son**. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

1 Kings 20:5 And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Benhadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt **deliver** me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy **children**;

2 Kings 6:28 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, **Give** thy **son**, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow.

2 Kings 6:29 So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, **Give** thy **son**, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

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Isaiah 43:6 I will say to the north, **Give** up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my **sons** from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

Jeremiah 18:21 Therefore **deliver** up their **children** to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle.

Ezekiel 16:21 That thou hast slain my **children**, and **delivered** them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?

Ezekiel 16:36 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy **children**, which thou didst **give** unto them;

### ***Giving in Marriage***

(But here it is the daughter who is given, never the son)

Deut 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

Deut 28:32 Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand.

Judges 3:6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

1 Sam 18:17 And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD'S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

1 Sam 25:44 But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim.

Ezra 9:12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever.

Neh 10:30 And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons:

Neh 13:25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

Jer 29:6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

## Other expressions

Giving is something that a master does; bearing is something that a mother does:

Exod 21:4 If his **master** have **given** him a wife, and **she** have **born** him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.

Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, **the LORD** gave her conception, and **she bare** a son.

### **Child born (ילד יולד qal passive)**

The only other instance of this construction is

2 Sam 12:15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the **child** that Uriah's wife **bare** unto David, and it was very sick.

It appears that the usage in Isa 9:6 may recall this.

### **Son born (ילד + בן)**

This is the common (~170x) expression for birth of a son, and the construction used in 7:14 and 8:3.

Qal is the act of the mother; Hiphil expresses action of a father in begetting; passives (Qal passive and Niphal) about 30 times total.

### **Child given (ילד + נתן)**

Only four instances; all have the sense of delivering into someone's control.

Genesis 30:26 **Give** me my wives and my **children**, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

1 Kings 17:23 And Elijah took the **child**, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and **delivered** him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

Isaiah 8:18 Behold, I and the **children** whom the LORD hath **given** me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

Joel 3:3 And they have cast lots for my people; and have **given** a **boy** ילד for an harlot, and sold a girl ילדה for wine, that they might drink.

## **Two Nouns Joined by Telisha Gedolah**

Find these with BW query in WTM '\*@n\* \*@n\*\*Zj\* . There are 50 instances in all

## Nouns in apposition, second or more refining the first:

### **Only two members**

Exod 30:31 **oil**, holy ointment

Exod 25:33; 37:19 three **bowls**, almond-shaped

Exod 28:6, 15 they shall make the ephod of **gold**: of blue, <<other colors>>

Lev 21:12 the **crown**, the anointing oil of his God, is upon him

Num 20:1 Then came the children of **Israel**, even the whole congregation

1 Chr 7:40 All these were the children of **Asher**, heads of their father's house

Jer 50:29 Call together against Babylon the **archers**: all ye that bend the bow

### **Summary of following series**

Gen 1:12 And the earth brought forth **grass**, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind:

Gen 34:25 two of the sons of **Jacob**: Simeon and Levi

Lev 10:1 the sons of **Aaron**, Nadab and Abihu

Deut 7:13 the fruit of thy **land**, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil,

1 Sam 1:1 his name was **Elkanah**, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

1 Kings 15:18 and king Asa sent them to **Benhadad**, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus,

2 Kings 16:7 **Tiglath** pileser king of Assyria

1 Chr 12:40 (MT v. 41) Moreover they that were nigh **them**, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, ... (Not between two noun, but still introducing a series)

1 Chr 21:12 or else three **days** the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence,

1 Chr 29:18 O LORD **God** of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, (for "Lord God, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Israel"; cf. Exod 3:16 with conjunctive *darga*, but 1 Kings 18:36 and 2 Chr 30:6 with disjunctive *pashta*)

Neh 9:25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all **goods**, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance:

Neh 11:4 And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of **Judah**; Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Perez;

Neh 13:13 And I made treasurers over the **treasuries**, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and

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of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah:

Isaiah 7:1 And it came to pass in the days of **Ahaz** the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah

Ezek 23:24 And they shall come against thee with **chariots**, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people,

Mal 3:5 those that oppress the wages of the **hireling**, the widow, and the fatherless,

### **Join two names**

Note also the cases in the previous category when the name with *Telisha gedolah* is first. Do some of these address the problem of parallelism vs descent in geneological lists?

2 Kings 11:2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of king **Joram**, sister of Ahaziah

2 Kings 25:25 Ishmael the son of **Nethaniah**, the son of Elishama,

1 Chr 5:14 These are the children of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of **Jaroah**, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz;

1 Chr 9:19 And Shallum the son of **Kore**, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah

1 Chr 25:4 Of Heman: the sons of Heman; Bukkiah, Mattaniah, **Uzziel**, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamtiezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth:

1 Chr 26:21 As concerning the sons of **Laadan**; the sons of the Gershonite Laadan,

2 Chr 20:14 Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of **Benaiah**, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah,

Ezra 2:2 Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, **Nehemiah**, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah.

Neh 7:7 Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, **Azariah**, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

Neh 11:5 And Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of **Colhozeh**, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni.

Neh 11:17 And Mattaniah the son of **Micha**, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph,

Neh 12:41 And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, **Miniamin**, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets;

Jer 36:14 Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of **Nethaniah**, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi,

## Grammatical divisions

### ***Subject from predicate:***

(Note similarity to apposition: in a topic-comment scheme, the subject is the topic, and the predicate expounds the comment)

Gen 27:46 If take **Jacob** a wife

Exod 27:9 on the south side **southward**, hangings

1 Chronicles 8:40 And were the sons of **Ulam** mighty men of valour, archers,

2 Chronicles 21:3 And gave them their **father** gifts great of silver, and of gold

Ezek 43:7 and the house of **Israel** my holy name, shall no more defile,

Jonah 4:6 And the LORD **God** a gourd prepared,

### ***Main clause from modifiers***

1 Kings 11:36 that there may be a light for David my **servant** always before me

## Construct-like instances

Lev 4:7 upon the **horns** of the altar of sweet incense

2 Chronicles 26:12 The **whole** number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour were two thousand and six hundred.

Jer 51:58 **walls** of Babylon,

Isa 13:4 the sound of an uproar of kingdoms of nations

## Other

1 Chr 12:40 (MT v. 41) Moreover they ... brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, **meal**, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: